

Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation  
Water Resources Division  
Water Rights Bureau

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT  
For Routine Actions with Limited Environmental Impact

Part I. Proposed Action Description

1. Applicant/Contact name and address: Coulter Ranches, Inc.  
1359 E Snow Creek Rd  
Brusett, MT 59318
2. Type of action: Application to Change a Water Right # 40E-30065608
3. Water source name: Groundwater
4. Location affected by project: NWNWNW of Section 24, T21N, R34E, Garfield County.
5. Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits:  
  
The application is to add a stock tank in the NWNWNW of Section 24, T21N, R34E, Garfield County, to improve grazing on the Applicant's land. Water is diverted by means of a groundwater well and a 0.5 mile pipeline to a new stock tank. Upon completion of the change, the water right will serve three stock tanks with a 1.5 mile pipeline. The stock tanks will water up to 200 animal units (AU) with a flow rate of 10 gallons per minute (GPM) and 3.40 acre feet (AF) per year.  
  
The DNRC shall a change authorization if an applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-402 MCA are met.
6. Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:  
(include agencies with overlapping jurisdiction)  
Montana Natural Resource Program.....Species of Concern  
US Fish and Wildlife Service.....Wetlands Mapper  
Montana Clean Water Act Information Center.....303(d) List  
NRCS Soil Survey .....Garfield County, Montana

Part II. Environmental Review

1. Environmental Impact Checklist:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

WATER QUANTITY, QUALITY AND DISTRIBUTION

Water quantity - Assess whether the source of supply is identified as a chronically or periodically dewatered stream by DFWP. Assess whether the proposed use will worsen the already dewatered condition.

Determination: No impacts identified

The source of water is groundwater, tributary of Snow Creek, which is not on the DFWP list.

Water quality - Assess whether the stream is listed as water quality impaired or threatened by DEQ, and whether the proposed project will affect water quality.

Determination: No impacts identified

The source of water is groundwater, tributary to Snow Creek, which is not on the DEQ list. No impact identified.

Groundwater - Assess if the proposed project impacts ground water quality or supply.

If this is a groundwater appropriation, assess if it could impact adjacent surface water flows.

Determination: No significant impacts identified

The well is unlikely to affect adjacent surface flows. No significant impact identified.

DIVERSION WORKS - Assess whether the means of diversion, construction and operation of the appropriation works of the proposed project will impact any of the following: channel impacts, flow modifications, barriers, riparian areas, dams, well construction.

Determination: No significant impacts identified

The diversion works is a 0.5 mile pipeline. Water is piped to a stock tank located in the NWNWNW of Section 24, T21N, R34E, Garfield County. No identified impact to existing resources.

#### UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Endangered and threatened species - Assess whether the proposed project will impact any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants or aquatic species or any "species of special concern," or create a barrier to the migration or movement of fish or wildlife. For groundwater, assess whether the proposed project, including impacts on adjacent surface flows, would impact any threatened or endangered species or "species of special concern."

Determination: No impacts identified

The Montana Natural Heritage Program identified one species of concern, the Greater Sage-Grouse. No identified impact to the endangered or threatened species.

Wetlands - Consult and assess whether the apparent wetland is a functional wetland (according to COE definitions), and whether the wetland resource would be impacted.

Determination: No impacts identified

No wetlands exist in the area.

Ponds - For ponds, consult and assess whether existing wildlife, waterfowl, or fisheries resources would be impacted.

Determination: Not applicable

This project does not include a pond.

GEOLOGY/SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE - Assess whether there will be degradation of soil quality, alteration of soil stability, or moisture content. Assess whether the soils are heavy in salts that could cause saline seep.

Determination: No impacts identified

Alkali deposits are identified in the project area from aerial photo. Saline seeps may exist in the evaporative deposits. No impact identified.

VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY/NOXIOUS WEEDS - Assess impacts to existing vegetative cover. Assess whether the proposed project would result in the establishment or spread of noxious weeds.

Determination: No impacts identified

The disturbed areas have reclaimed themselves since construction. No impact identified.

AIR QUALITY - Assess whether there will be a deterioration of air quality or adverse effects on vegetation due to increased air pollutants.

Determination: No impact identified

There should be no impact to air quality from this development. No impacts identified.

HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES - Assess whether there will be degradation of unique archeological or historical sites in the vicinity of the proposed project if it is on State or Federal Lands. If it is not on State or Federal Lands simply state NA-project not located on State or Federal Lands.

Determination: NA-project not located on State or Federal Lands.

DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AND ENERGY - Assess any other impacts on environmental resources of land, water and energy not already addressed.

Determination: No impacts identified

No anticipated additional impacts.

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT
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LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS - Assess whether the proposed project is inconsistent with any locally adopted environmental plans and goals.

Determination: No impact identified

The proposed project is not inconsistent with locally adopted environmental plans and goals.

ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES - Assess whether the proposed project will impact access to or the quality of recreational and wilderness activities.

Determination: No impacts identified

This project is constructed on private property.

HUMAN HEALTH - Assess whether the proposed project impacts on human health.

Determination: No impacts identified

PRIVATE PROPERTY - Assess whether there are any government regulatory impacts on private property rights.

Yes\_\_\_ No\_x\_\_ If yes, analyze any alternatives considered that could reduce, minimize, or eliminate the regulation of private property rights.

Determination: No impacts identified

OTHER HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES - For routine actions of limited environmental impact, the following may be addressed in a checklist fashion.

Impacts on:

(a) Cultural uniqueness and diversity?

No impacts identified

(b) Local and state tax base and tax revenues?

No significant impacts identified

- |   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| (c) <u>Existing land uses?</u>                                  | No significant impacts identified |
| (d) <u>Quantity and distribution of employment?</u>             | No impacts identified             |
| (e) <u>Distribution and density of population and housing?</u>  | No impacts identified             |
| (f) <u>Demands for government services?</u>                     | No impacts identified             |
| (g) <u>Industrial and commercial activity?</u>                  | No impacts identified             |
| (h) <u>Utilities?</u>   | No significant impacts identified |
| (i) <u>Transportation?</u>                                      | No impacts identified             |
| (j) <u>Safety?</u>  | No impacts identified             |
| (k) <u>Other appropriate social and economic circumstances?</u> | No impacts identified             |
2. Secondary and cumulative impacts on the physical environment and human population:
- |                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <u>Secondary Impacts</u>  | No secondary impacts have been identified  |
| <u>Cumulative Impacts</u> | No Cumulative impacts have been identified |
3. Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures: Mitigation or stipulations are not planned at this time.
4. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives to the proposed action, including the no action alternative, if an alternative is reasonably available and prudent to consider: No mitigation measures have been identified at this time.

### **PART III. Conclusion**

1. Preferred Alternative: Authorize the change for an additional stock tank.
2. Comments and Responses: None at this time.
5. Finding:  
Yes\_\_\_ No\_X\_\_ Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required?

If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action:

None of the identified impacts for any of the alternatives is significant as defined in ARM 36.2.524

Name of person(s) responsible for preparation of EA:

Name: Porter Dassenko  
Title: Water Resource Specialist  
Date: January 27, 2014